Statement of Edward A. Merlis, Senior Vice President
Legislative and International Affairs
Air Transport Association of America
Before the Senate Aviation Subcommittee hearing on
Aviation Delay Prevention
March 29, 2001

Good morning, Madam Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I am Edward Merlis, Senior Vice President of the Air Transport Association of America (ATA).[1] I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss our shared concerns with the level of delays in the air transportation system, what can be done about them today, and what can be done to accommodate future customer demand for air transportation. Additionally, we want to comment on the important legislation that you have proposed to address the delay problem. We believe it is necessary to take bold steps to resolve these issues, and we feel that your legislation is an important milestone in guiding us down the correct path.

Simply stated, our aviation system's three components of capacity – airlines, air traffic control, and airports -- are out of synch and consequently are not meeting the needs of the traveling and shipping public. Each is under the control of very different forces. Yet, at the end of the day, all of the components must work together harmoniously, if we are to have a smoothly functioning aviation system.

By any measure -- available seat miles, enplaned passengers, aircraft departures, number of aircraft etc. -- airlines are making available more to the traveling and shipping public, and concurrently the traveling and shipping public is using our services more. In the past ten years[2] we have made 25% more seat miles available, on 23% more flights, yet the traveling public has purchased even more -- 33% more. As a result, planes are more crowded – 71% of our seats are filled – than at any time since World War II.

This should come as no surprise to anyone in the aviation community or indeed, to the public at large. We have known what the demands on the system would be for quite some time. Ten years ago (February 1991) the FAA Aviation Forecast for Domestic Traffic projected some 678.4 million

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[1] ATA member airlines include: Alaska Airlines, Aloha Airlines, America West Airlines, American Airlines, American Trans Air, Continental Airlines, Delta Air Lines, DHL Airways, Emery Worldwide, Evergreen International Airlines, Federal Express, Hawaiian Airlines, Midwest Express Airlines, Northwest Airlines, Polar Air Cargo, Southwest Airlines, Trans World Airlines, United Airlines, United Parcel Service, and US Airways. Associate members include: Aerovias De Mexico, Air Canada, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, and Mexicana De Aviacion.

[2] For purposes of this discussion, the ten years covered are 1989 – 1999. Complete DOT Form 41 data for calendar year 2000 is not yet available.

passengers for fiscal year 2000. When the final data for 2000 is compiled, we will see that the FAA's aviation forecast was remarkably accurate.

So with almost ten years of lead time, how could we find ourselves in the current situation? There are many pieces of the problem, but let's examine each component's contribution.

Airlines: The airlines' contribution to the delay problem is more frequent service to communities large and small, and has been somewhat exacerbated as a consequence of acquiring regional jets. These aircraft, for which the number purchased or on order exceeds 1200 at this time, can fly longer distances, with greater payloads than the turbo props that they are replacing – and they respond to the long expressed desires of customers in more modest sized communities to receive pure jet service. However, since they fly in airspace used by larger jets, they add to congestion.

Air Traffic Control: The second component of the capacity equation is the air traffic control system. This subcommittee knows full well the problems in developing, acquiring, deploying and staffing an air traffic control system capable of meeting the public's demand for safe air transportation. Suffice it to say means need to be found to accelerate dramatically the innovations which are in the pipeline. Otherwise, previous summer's problems will not be ameliorated to the satisfaction of anyone – the airlines, our customers, or the Congress. Appended to this statement is an industry prepared top ten list of most important ATC-related programs that can be implemented over a five-year period and which would result in real national aviation system capacity improvements.

We would also note, and applaud, the important near term contribution to delay prevention Secretary Mineta made on Tuesday. He called upon air traffic controllers, who now have greater access to weather data, to reduce ground stops, allow flights to take off, and permit pilots to navigate around storms. Clearly this is a safe and efficient way of dealing with our near term problem, and the air traffic controllers union has agreed to this procedure. I think it is safe to say that if properly and promptly implemented, this step holds more promise for delay reduction this summer than any other initiative that could be undertaken.

The third component of the problem is airport capacity. You have heard the data -- 12 major airports account for 51% of all delays. Since 1974, when Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport opened, only four new air carrier airports have opened. Between 1995 and this fall, only eight new runways have opened, at the top 100 airports, and there are 14 new runways planned to be operational through December 2005.

What can be done about this? We think this is an area ripe for decisive congressional intervention, and we think that your bill, Senator Hutchison, is an important step in the right direction.

Some have suggested that limits be put on our national economy's demand for air transportation. This is wrong. Throttling back the economy is not a solution. Increasing capacity is the

only appropriate response to the public's needs – and in the long run, the only response that the public will accept. Moreover, the more efforts are directed at demand management, the more likely we are to lose focus on the real problems and the more we will fail to provide what the American people need – safe, fast, frequent, efficient air transportation at fair prices.

We have reviewed the provisions of your bill -- at least as they appeared in the Staff Working Draft dated March 26, 2001 -- and provide the following comments on how we think it would help to address the problem.

Section 3. FAA Study and Report.

The analyses required by this section would help to develop a better understanding of the current nature of our capacity shortage. As we read the section, it requires the FAA to submit annual reports for five years on the degree to which airlines "overschedule" departures at the 30 largest airports in the United States. We prefer to look at this not as an "overscheduling" issue, but as a failure to provide adequate infrastructure issue; indeed, a failure to even commit to provide adequate infrastructure. We believe that the results of this process will provide a collection of compelling data that can be used to help build the kind of aviation infrastructure the national system requires.

But, we must restrain our hopes. Attached to my testimony is an article from Tuesday's Los Angeles Times. In it, all six candidates for mayor announce their opposition to the expansion of Los Angeles International Airport despite the public demand for more and better service at LAX. While one might think Californians particularly would have learned something from the failure to build an adequate electric power infrastructure, it looks as though at least with regard to our national aviation system, the lesson has not been learned.

We also suggest that the "overscheduling" analysis be broadened. Individually airlines do not overschedule departures at an airport, as the bill seems to assume. But collectively the combination of departures and arrivals by all airlines and other airport users may exceed the airport's capacity under certain circumstances or runway configurations. Thus, focusing on departures only may not cover the full range of issues that cause congestion and delays.

Similarly, focusing on "scheduled" performance may not fully address the issue. We think that a better measure for the analysis would be actual performance of both arrivals and departures. In that manner we would be in a position to better understand what is actually happening and use this information as a spring board for increased capacity.

Additionally, we think that the report to Congress should incorporate a requirement that the Secretary spell out the capacity enhancements that need to be implemented in both the air traffic control and airport systems in order to reduce this purported "overscheduling" at specific airport locations. If the 30 largest airports and the Department are going to go to the effort of compiling and analyzing the

data, let's have Congress be informed of the solutions to the problems exposed. Absent this, we cannot hope to have accountability for providing needed infrastructure in the future.

Congestion/Peak Hour Pricing

In the version of the bill we reviewed, we noted that there was a study of the utility of congestion pricing. Congestion or peak hour pricing has been suggested by some as a means to ration airport capacity. Our concern with congestion or peak hour pricing is that these regimes focus on demand management rather than capacity management. In our view, and as Secretary Mineta has said, the necessity to implement such a scheme is an admission of failure to meet the public's transportation needs – and the demands of our economy.

If such a study were to be undertaken, we suggest that critical questions be asked about the goal and operation of such a program. Is it designed to limit demand or to produce increased airport capacity? This is a basic issue that must be forthrightly confronted. It is important to keep in mind that the revenue necessary to expand our capacity constrained airports is readily available today. The action by the Congress in enacting AIR-21, together with the commitment of the air carriers and the public finance community to underwrite expansion at the capacity constrained airports, obviates the need for congestion pricing as a revenue generating mechanism.

We are also concerned that fees raised during peak hours to limit demand will not be devoted to commensurate investment in capacity. When that happens, congestion pricing is inconsistent with the goal of building and maintaining a safe, healthy, vibrant, and competitive national air transportation system.

Among our other concerns with congestion pricing, are the following questions which should be carefully analyzed:

- How will congestion pricing be established and who will be responsible for setting it?
- Will congestion pricing serve as an excuse not to expand capacity?
- How will traffic from small and midsize communities be able to bear the incremental costs arising from peak hour pricing? To what extent would such a system disenfranchise residents of these communities from the national network? Alternatively, pushing service to these communities outside of the peak hours may necessitate residents of those communities adding an additional overnight to a trip, at significant costs that need to be computed.

- To what extent will public policy exemptions -- small communities, new entrants, business jets, or government aircraft to name just a few -- result in just as much congestion but at a higher prices for those not exempted?

- Should a congestion-pricing scheme be revenue neutral, so as not to build up tempting surpluses that local officials will inevitably seek to siphon off the airport?

- Even if a congestion pricing system is revenue neutral, should the terms by which grand-fathered airports operate (49 U.S.C 47107(b)(2)) be changed to preclude them from using these funds for non-aviation purposes?

- How will congestion pricing affect feeds from small planes and communities that may not be able to afford the peak hour surcharge? Without that feeder traffic and with fewer passengers on the connecting long haul over which the surcharges are spread, to what extent will the scheme have the potential to further increase prices on tickets?

Madame Chairman, in an economically ideal world, congestion pricing is a measure of value that should be reflected in the costs paid by the air carriers and their customers. But we do not live in an economically ideal world. Based on conversations with members and staff of this and other Congressional Committees of relevant jurisdiction, we believe that there is a strong likelihood -- I personally believe a certainty – Congress would require that any congestion pricing regime implemented waive congestion pricing for some, thus undermining any potential congestion mitigation for all. Further, the resolution of complex legal, economic, and most importantly, safety issues which would be necessitated by such a scheme would inevitably detract from efforts to get on with addressing the more critical long-term issues.

Section 4. Limited Exemption from Antitrust Laws.

Section 4 provides the Secretary of Transportation with the authority to approve scheduling agreements reached by airlines if they are not adverse to the public interest, and provides a process by which parties and the public can participate in this limited waiver of the antitrust laws.

Once again, let me note that the thrust of section 4 is to find a way to work our way out of the infrastructure shortfall by means of demand management. While a laudable palliative, it too is an admission of failure – a failure to build an aviation system capable of meeting the public's demand. Nevertheless, we do want to be constructive and so offer the following comments concerning technical and operational concerns.

Section 4(b)(1) grants authority for carriers to file a request with the Secretary to discuss cooperative scheduling arrangements, and section 4(b)(2) provides that an air carrier may file an agreement reached pursuant to such a discussion. However, section 4(d) grants the Secretary the authority to exempt a

person from the antitrust laws to the extent necessary to allow the persons to execute the agreement. We think the order of proceeding needs to be reversed. Unless carriers are exempt from the antitrust laws for the purpose of holding such discussions, e.g. section 4(b)(1) discussions, they won't be able to come up with a section 4(b)(2) agreement limiting capacity.

Even if the grant of the immunity preceded the discussions and agreement, we have concerns as to how the process would work. Let's say, for sake of this discussion, that three airlines serving Dulles obtained antitrust immunity and agreed to cap arrivals and departures during a particularly congested time of the day. In doing so, let's say that the carriers dropped their Dulles to Dallas, Dulles to Atlanta, and Dulles to Charlotte flights during that time period, a total of eight flight reductions, e.g. three flights to Dallas, two to Atlanta, and two to Charlotte. A month later, a fourth carrier that was neither a party to the discussions, or the agreement, seeing the change in schedule now adds flights to Dallas, Atlanta and Charlotte. Additionally, noting that congestion at Dulles has been mitigated by the reduction in eight flights, the carrier increases service from five additional cities to Dulles during the time period, creating a mini-bank of connecting flights.

So what have we here? Three carriers obtained anti-trust immunity, cleared out some of the flights during the congested period, saw their own schedules become more orderly, and a month later are rewarded by having their business skimmed by a non-participant who restores flights -- and presumably delays -- during the peak to the original number.

We do not mean to dampen the creativity necessary to find remedies for the current situation. However, in the absence of any certainty that even immunized discussions will have their intended effect, we believe that carriers must be reluctant to enter into such scheduling talks in the first place if the potential, and likely result, is to be severely harmed in the marketplace.

There is one approach that might be considered. While ATA's Board has not even discussed this, I throw it out in the interest of being constructive, mindful that it is a unique, circumstance-driven demand management response to the failure to build capacity to meet the public's requirements. Using the example cited above,

Is there some way that on a day with inclement weather, those three carriers who have eight flights to and from Dulles during the same peak time to the same destinations can coordinate their schedules and cancellations with antitrust immunity so as to accommodate as many passengers on those flights and reduce delays for everyone?

It may be worth exploring that narrow circumstance before biting off the much larger antitrust immunity issue proposed in the bill.

Secondly, I suggest the Committee explore with the Secretary the scope of his authority and his willingness to use his "bully pulpit" to deal with schedule exigencies without fear of adverse competitive

consequences. I do not have any specific proposal in mind in this regard; however, I do have great confidence in the Secretary's understanding of the problems involved and his creativity in dealing with them.

Section 5. Expedited Coordinated Environmental Review Process.

The title of this section is music to our ears. For far too long airport capacity enhancement projects – and I might add Air Traffic Control capacity enhancement projects too – have been tied up in knots by the airport capacity, planning, development, and environmental review process. Whether it is the Army Corps of Engineers review of the Seattle wetlands mitigation program or the National Park Service's reluctance to allow the FAA to install critically needed Terminal Doppler Weather Radar at Floyd Bennett Field, a former military base in New York, the time has come to bring this charade to an end.

With respect to section 5(a) it is our observation that environmental streamlining necessitates more than a congressional mandate to an agency to "expedite" or "coordinate" – witness Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) attempts to comply with TEA–21's similar provision. Evidently, without any specific direction other than the broad brush to "expedite" or "coordinate," a legislative fix is not going to result in much improvement. We think the solution is to identify specific requirements that "expedite" or "coordinate" rather than an admonition to do so.

Similarly, requiring that reviews be done concurrently rather than consecutively sometimes speeds up the process and sometimes bogs it down. Even the concept of a date certain for completing environmental reviews, without some action forcing mechanism, may not work. For example, the Endangered Species Act contains statutory deadlines that are exceeded as often as not using a favorite regulator's trick -- the clock is not started until the documentation is "complete" -- a determination made exclusively by the agency only after multiple submissions and lengthy reviews. So while we feel that the notion is essential, without more specificity we are pessimistic about the effectiveness of this mandate. Clearly, we want to work closely with you to incorporate the kinds of detail that will make this essential component work effectively.

We think you should also consider adding to the bill direction to the FAA and other agencies to focus on those impacts routinely implicated by airport infrastructure projects, and to require agencies with jurisdiction over other types of impacts and/or relevant resources to identify these during the initial scoping of the environmental review process. The purpose of this provision would be to eliminate unnecessary analysis of environmental impacts not implicated by a specific project and to reduce situations in which the FAA is only made aware of other potential environmental impacts late in the review process.

With respect to Section 5(b), we do not believe that the current federal judicial review procedures are the source of delay in getting these airport capacity projects approved. Rather it is the

threat of litigation that often leads to over-documentation and unnecessary rounds of review that delays projects and inhibits the timely expansion of the national aviation system.

Since some of these delay problems are driven by state laws, we are researching what Congress can do to alleviate these adverse state actions challenging airport projects of national significance. Clearly that is another area ripe for review and inclusion in this important legislation, and we plan to bring the results of our research to your attention.

One other concept we want to bring to your attention. Attached to my testimony is a list of airport capacity projects that we all know must be undertaken in order to bring about the delay mitigation we all seek. We suggest that this list, or an even more extensive list, be incorporated into the legislation, and serve as a guidepost to airports, the FAA, other government agencies, and the courts as to what Congress believes to be the locations at which prompt consideration of required reviews is necessary. And, we urge that there be annual reports documenting the progress on the road to increasing capacity at these facilities. Should the Congress find that progress is not being made, we would urge consideration of even more dramatic steps to bring about the aviation infrastructure necessary to ensure the economic well being of this country.

Section 6. Chief Operating Officer.

Section 6 provides that the Secretary of Transportation may set any level for the FAA Chief Operating Officer's compensation. Let's face it. This is a tough job that will need someone with broad experience, commitment, and a willingness to take on a very difficult and visible challenge. It is a rare individual, indeed, who would shoulder these burdens with the financial constraints contained in current law. Either we want to find the best-qualified individual and compensate him or her appropriately, or we will be willing to settle for less. The country cannot afford to settle for less. We urge the enactment of Section 6.

While we are discussing the Chief Operating Officer position, we think that it should be made crystal clear that the FAA COO is empowered to hire or promote a number of other individuals who can similarly be compensated at market rates. We want the best and the brightest for this difficult task; we need to ensure that the tools to hire and retain them are available.

Madam Chairman, we stand ready to work with you to move this legislation forward, to bring about the expeditious deployment of new technologies and new approaches to expediting the environmental issues associated with airport expansion, and to seeing a new day in aviation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this statement. We look forward to responding to the subcommittee's questions.

ATA Top Ten ATC Modernization Program List

This list is comprised of the top ten most important ATC-related programs that can be implemented over a five-year period and which would result in real national aviation system capacity improvements.

1. **En Route Software and Hardware (HOST Computer) Upgrades**: The HOST Computer is the "central nervous system" for the En Route Air Traffic Control System, but it operates on antiquated software. The upgrades included in these programs would bring the system to current standards, but also would bring the capability to automatically assign routes around impacted airspace such as areas affected by severe weather.

2. **Airspace Redesign**: Along with the RVSM program, this badly-needed redesign program will help to relieve the daily airspace saturation that causes ground delays and restrictive increased spacing between aircraft in the en route environment. By re-drawing air traffic control center and sector boundaries and revising arrival and departure routes at complex terminals, airplanes can be routed through the system more efficiently.

3. **Choke Point Initiatives**: Over the past year, FAA and industry have developed 21 initiatives designed to help relieve seven choke point areas identified by users of the National Airspace System. These areas are in the Midwest corridor east of Chicago and several sectors dealing

with traffic in/out of the New York terminal area – the most congested airspace in the world. The choke point initiatives are focused on resolving conflicts between full and equitable access to the NAS without violating FAA regulatory requirements or degrading safety in any way.

4. **Domestic Reduced Vertical Separation Minimums (RVSM)**: Perhaps the biggest problem in the ATC system today is the lack of en route airspace, brought on by outdated separation standards and requirements. Updating these standards by reducing the vertical separation above 29,000 ft. (now 2000 ft.) to 1000 ft. will allow FAA to make better, more efficient use of our nation's airspace.

5. **Aircraft Vortex Spacing System (AVOSS) at major terminals**: This research, development, and implementation program will increase runway capacity at some 30 airports initially by allowing reductions in spacing on final approach in those instances when the system determines increased spacing, necessitated by wake turbulence, is not required.

6. **Controller-Pilot Data Link Communication (CPDLC)**: This program will speed the modernization of voice and data communications technology between controllers and pilots and allow for more automated information transmission between the ground and cockpit, especially in the oceanic environment.

7. **Free Flight Phase I and II Implementation:** The Free Flight initiatives consist of a series of programs designed to improve National Airspace System operations by providing more direct routings while maintaining maximum safety margins throughout the system. These programs include efforts such as **Collaborative Decision-Making (CDM)**, to improve communications and planning between the FAA and the users of the Air Traffic Control System; **User Request Evaluation Tool**, a conflict probing tool to facilitate more direct flight; the **Center/TRACON Automation System,** a sequencing and spacing tool to aid in more efficient terminal operations; and the **Surface Movement Advisor**, to expedite ground operations at airports.

8. **Safe Flight 21 Initiatives:** This government/industry partnership is designed to validate the concept of free flight in the real-world operating environment. There are nine major enhancements, including **ADS-B** (a satellite-based surveillance tool) and **TIS-B**. These initiatives will, among other things, help to reduce separation standards, reduce runway incursions, prevent surface collisions, and improve the provision of real-time weather reports to the cockpit.

9. **Full-Scale Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) Satellite Navigation Implementation (including LAAS, WAAS, and RNP/RNAV procedures):** Completing the implementation of the GPS network, along with the Local Area Augmentation System (LAAS) and Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS), will provide more accurate, reliable navigational capabilities in bad weather, allow for reduced separation requirements, more accurate precision approaches,

and increased availability of direct routings. In addition, FAA must complete the development of new RNP/RNAV procedures that will allow pilots to use the most efficient departure and arrival procedures. These systems should be developed and implemented so that they are fully compatible with similar systems elsewhere in the world, for example the European Galileo (GNSS) system.

10. **Staffing**: In order to fully implement these and other initiatives, FAA will need to hire and train 75 certification experts to aid in the acceptance of new avionics needed to use the new satellite systems and ADS-B. Also, 1,050 new air traffic controllers must be hired beginning in FY 2001 to cover attrition and expand the number of sectors.

Top Airport Capacity Enhancements

This list is comprised of the airport capacity improvements that are needed to truly improve delay problems in the United States. Coupled with our Top Ten ATC Improvements, these projects will significantly reduce delays, increase capacity, and improve the efficiency of the national air transportation system. *This list is presented alphabetically and is not prioritized in any fashion.*

Atlanta Hartsfield (ATL) – A new 9,000' runway 10/28 is in the final EIS review stages. If the current EIS process completion date of July 2001 is met, the runway can be in service by May 2005. This project, which is estimated to cost $1 billion, will provide capacity benefits of fifty percent – from 180 operations per hour to 270 per hour.

Boston Logan (BOS) – A new unidirectional 5,000' commuter runway will alleviate delays at Boston Logan by as much as 60 percent during certain operational conditions. MASSPORT and the airline industry are trying to overcome local political opposition, which have prevented this runway from

moving forward. Plans are mostly complete but construction is not expected to begin before 2002. It is estimated that this runway will cost $33 million.

Chicago O'Hare (ORD) – A new 7,500' 9/27 runway, discussed then shelved in 1994, could be completed in the 2008 timeframe if planning was to re-start today and construction began in 2005-06. Current "back of the envelope" estimates place a $2 billion price tag on this project. This project would create the ability for "triple approaches" at O'Hare but would also require the relocation of other runways, taxiways and support facilities.

Cincinnati (CVG) – A third, fully independent, 8,000' North-South runway that will improve capacity at Cincinnati by as much as 50-70 percent by providing triple parallel approaches. The runway, with an estimated price tag of $220 million, is designed to open with full ILS capabilities. It is currently in the Draft EIS comment stages; this process should be completed by December 2001. If this date is met, the estimated opening date is December 2005.

Dallas-Ft. Worth (DFW) – A 9,760' eighth runway at DFW would allow for four approach streams during IFR conditions, and would take the annual capacity to 1.2 million operations. This runway would be located on current airport property on the west side of the airfield. EIS work is anticipated to begin in 2001 and without undue delay the runway could come into service in 2006 at a cost of $350 million.

Greensboro (GSO) – Airport management is expecting a final EIS decision on new runway 5L/23R in the spring of 2001. This runway carries an estimated price tag of $126 million and will increase the capacity of Greensboro by as much as 60 percent when it goes into service in late 2005 or early 2006.

Los Angeles (LAX) -- Airfield delays are becoming more common at LAX, especially as traffic continues to grow without any appreciable increases in airfield capacity. The City of Los Angeles is currently developing a master plan, and its preferred alternative includes marginal airfield improvements, such as additional taxiways to improve airfield circulation and an extension to one of the primary takeoff runways. However, because have political, environmental and community pressures, the preferred alternative does not include the addition of any new runways. There is also strong sentiment in the region that planning should focus on improvements to other airports in Southern California instead of LAX.

New York LaGuardia (LGA) and Kennedy (JFK) – While there are no planned new runway projects at LaGuardia Airport, there are technology improvements (see the ATA Top Ten List) that would improve – but not resolve the shortage of -- capacity at LaGuardia. Additionally, we understand that PANYNJ planners are beginning to look at potential new runway capacity at JFK; while we encourage this planning effort, there are no proposals that can be evaluated as of this writing.

Philadelphia (PHL) – Airfield delays are a serious impediment to future air traffic growth at Philadelphia and the problem will be exacerbated with the completion of two terminal expansion projects in the next two years. The City has retained outside engineering and planning firms to study alternatives to: (1) provide more runway capacity, with the goal of accommodating dual independent jet operations; and (2) improve the constrained system of taxiways, with the goal of accommodating two way traffic in many areas. The City has not yet identified a preferred alternative.

San Francisco (SFO) – Airport planners are in the preliminary engineering and environmental planning phases, including the modeling of capacity benefits of the various options for adding runway(s). The next step in the process is to identify a preferred alternative – no target date has been set yet. Even without unnecessary delay, any new runway(s) would not come into service until after 2008. Current cost estimates for improving runway capacity at San Francisco range from $2.5 to $10 billion.

Seattle-Tacoma (SEA) – A new 8,500' third runway is in the final environmental approval process, awaiting permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and Washington State Department of Ecology. This runway, which will increase the capacity of Sea-Tac by 12-18 arrivals per hour in poor weather, is expected to begin service in 2006 and will cost $773 million.

St. Louis Lambert (STL) – New runway (12R/30L) just received its final environmental approvals, and the airport is in the final stages of design and land acquisition. When completed in 2006, this $1.1 billion runway will increase the hourly capacity of St. Louis Lambert by 43-51 percent.

Washington Dulles (IAD) – Airport planners currently finishing the design of two new runways New runway 1L/19R is targeted for completion in December 2011, will cost an estimated $183 million, and will reduce delays by approximately 33 percent. New runway 12L/30R, targeted for completion in January 2006, carries an estimated price tag of $216 million, will reduce delays by an estimated 50 percent.

Former Military Bases – The airline industry supports having FAA take a lead role in calling together the various supporters and opponents of former military bases (for example, El Toro, Moffitt, and Homestead) to determine what might be done to advance the conversion of these facilities into practical commercial aviation facilities. All operational, environmental and other concerns must be addressed, but the Federal Government, through the Federal Aviation Administration, must take a leadership role in advancing the cause of expanding commercial aviation infrastructure through the military base conversion process.

Tuesday, March 27, 2001 |

Mayoral Candidates Join Opposition to Expanding LAX

Election: Hahn and Soboroff, who had given qualified support for the plan, unite with their rivals as the campaign moves into the final two-week stretch.

By MATEA GOLD, DOUGLAS P. SHUIT, Times Staff Writers

In a reflection of the sway held by vocal community organizations, all six top mayoral candidates have pledged to oppose a plan to expand Los Angeles International Airport, airport growth critics announced Monday.

City Atty. James K. Hahn and businessman Steve Soboroff, who had previously given qualified support for the expansion, joined their four mayoral rivals in opposing the proposal to increase annual passenger trips at LAX from 67 million to 89 million by 2015.

The pledge, drafted by an anti-expansion group, said the LAX master plan "should not be submitted to nor approved by the city of Los Angeles." It also stated that the airport should be constrained to operate safely within its existing facilities and that Los Angeles should work with the airport and other communities to develop a regional air transportation plan.

The pledges came as the campaign moves into its final two-week stretch before the April 10 election. On Monday, Soboroff unveiled a plan to draw biotech firms to Los Angeles, and Rep. Xavier Becerra proposed giving Los Angeles residents rebates if they conserve electricity.

The opposition by all six candidates to the LAX expansion is a blow to Mayor Richard Riordan and officials at the airport, who have spent six years and more than $60 million putting together a $12-billion proposal to expand runways, build a new passenger terminal and make highway and rail improvements to serve an expected boom in demand for passenger and cargo services.

Riordan has endorsed Soboroff for mayor, but his spokesman said Monday that the mayor does not expect the real estate broker to mirror all his positions. "Everybody who has had an association with the mayor knows that he does not ask for ideological purity," said Deputy Mayor Ben Austin. "He asks for his associates to exercise their judgment, which is what Steve is doing."

The signed pledges were released Monday by the Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion, a coalition representing about 2,000 residents of Westchester and Playa del Rey who want to see, among other measures, air traffic diverted to the Ontario and Palmdale airports.

At a news conference outside the airport's north runway Monday afternoon, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Los Angeles), Los Angeles City Councilman Ruth Galanter and El Segundo Mayor Mike Gordon said the candidates were listening to constituent complaints about noise levels, air pollution and traffic problems that would only worsen if the airport is allowed to continue to grow.
"All the candidates have begun to realize that the people impacted by the airport are a significant enough voting block that they are worth paying attention to," Galanter said.

"I am thrilled that we got all six candidates--that means the master plan is dead on arrival," Gordon said.

Although their four opponents had already registered their opposition to the LAX expansion, Hahn and Soboroff had supported the proposal with some qualifications. Both said they wanted the airport to focus on mitigation measures to reduce traffic, noise and air pollution before construction of a new passenger terminal.

In a statement released Monday, Hahn said the current master plan does not achieve a regional solution or address neighbors' needs.

"I believe we must scrap the current master plan and take a leadership role with our neighboring cities to find a truly regional solution," he said.

Ace Smith, campaign manager for Soboroff, insisted that the real estate broker did not change his position about the airport.

"He's always said he's got serious problems with the master plan," Smith said. "The question here was, 'Does he favor it as it exists?' The answer is no."

The airport plan is strongly backed by business and labor groups, who were quick to respond Monday.

Lydia H. Kennard, executive director of Los Angeles World Airports, the city agency that operates LAX, called the pledges "neither surprising nor particularly significant."
Kennard said she was confident that once the election is over "the next mayor will work constructively" with the airport to deal with its problems.

Brad Rooker, president of a sheet metal workers union local in Los Angeles, said he believes that Hahn and Antonio Villaraigosa, who has the endorsement of the County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, will revisit the airport issue if elected.

Meanwhile, Becerra took on another hot issue Monday, proposing an energy-saving rebate plan that would give consumers who save electricity a discount on their bill.

The Democratic congressman laid out a plan that would reward people who save energy by reselling the electricity they would have used to the state power grid, and then splitting the profit from the sale with the consumer. The rest of the money would go to paying down the DWP's debt.

Under his proposal, Becerra said people who reduce their energy use by 20% would get a 36% discount in their bill. Those who cut their electricity usage by 10% would save 15% on their bill.

"Simply because we're an island in a stormy sea doesn't mean we shouldn't be conservationists," said Becerra, who challenged the mayor and the Department of Water and Power to implement his idea right away. "This is a win-win situation. Why we're not doing this right now, I don't know."

Frank Salas, chief of staff for DWP General Manager S. David Freeman, said the agency would look at the plan.

"We've got to work out the details, but it's something that we would consider," Salas said. "If we could conserve energy, that's that much more energy we could sell to the state and help get us through the crisis in the summer."

If the DWP recommended the plan, it would have to be approved by the department's board, the City Council and Riordan.

Austin said that Riordan is "open to all proposals."

"The bottom line is that Los Angeles has a secure and affordable source of energy, and only because of that are we able to have a conversation about how to help our neighbors," Austin added.

On Monday, Becerra demonstrated how to cut electricity use at his downtown headquarters: He oversaw maintenance workers unscrewing light bulbs, then shut down an idle computer.
And he even got down on his knees and cleaned out the campaign's packed refrigerator, explaining that keeping air circulating inside the refrigerator and cleaning the condenser coils underneath or behind the machine helps reduce energy use.

Meanwhile, at a campaign stop in Northridge, Soboroff unveiled his plan to promote the biotech and biomedicine industries.

He proposed a tax credit for companies that create jobs in those sectors, but declined to say how much it might cost.

He also promised to hire a specialist in the mayor's office to focus solely on luring biotech and biomed companies to Los Angeles. And he pledged to work with leaders of USC, UCLA and other academic institutions to encourage commercial development of their research.

With an ample supply of labor, financial institutions, real estate and research institutions, Los Angeles can support dramatic growth in the industry, he said.

"We have the ingredients to bake the cake; we just haven't put them together well," he said.

Hahn picked up support from a group of Asian Pacific American leaders Monday who credited the city

attorney for his outreach to Asian communities in Los Angeles. The group of backers who gathered in Little Tokyo to announce their support for Hahn included former Harbor Commission President Leland Wong, Francis Hashimoto, president of the Little Tokyo Business Assn., and Joseph Ahn, past president of the Korean American Coalition.